

Cindy Tower is an artist who has painted some of MARAD's Ready Reserve Fleet ships, and she plans to paint more. She wrote this article for the MARAD Update about her work.

I was born on Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico, where Dad was a test pilot. After the Air Force, he went into business and moved our family to the east coast. My brothers and I pretty much grew up along the New England coast. I love ships and water (which makes New York City where I live now so great). But, more importantly, I love American ingenuity and grew up with a Yankee make-thrift aesthetic where community members fixed things themselves and didn't need to buy everything new all the time. I grew up fascinated by materials and liked best to be around people that made things with their own hands. Besides my immediate family, I was lucky to have a grandfather who had been a nurseryman and another who was an engineer. The women in my family were the same way; making things from scratch.

Basically, I decided to paint paintings honoring vanishing American industries because everything I love is disappearing. Americans are making fewer things locally and are using computers and technologies to do so instead of using their hands.

I paint works from life and find myself standing in actual environments for hours on end often without light or heat. Often while painting, the places themselves are being dismantled and taken apart. I will literally return to a site to work on an unfinished piece only to find it completely gone. I frequently seem to work around a lot of salvage workers gripping cutting torches.

I'm on a mission to preserve and capture industries including shipping, ranching, brick factories, steel factories, wire mills, sewing sweat shops, oystering, saw mills, even mom-and-pop styled hardware stores, and outboard motor repair shops.

Somehow just taking a picture of these places isn't enough. I want to feel these places and record them slowly so that a viewer might also gain a sense of the place in a soulful way.

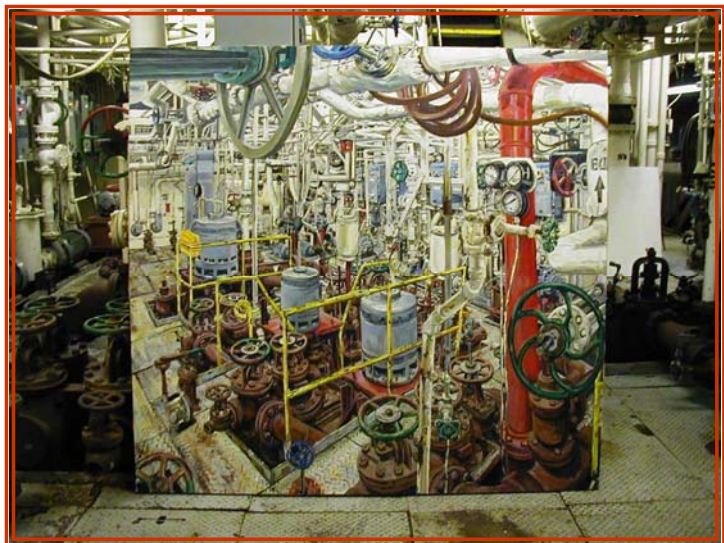
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Cindy Tower sitting on the back of her pick-up truck at the Port of Houston painting MARAD's SS Diamond State

Capturing America's Vanishing Industries

The Workplace Series of Artist Cindy Tower



Cindy Tower's oil rendition of the engine room of MARAD's SS Diamond State